

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6291

INFO DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE//INOCN

CINCUSAFE LINDSEY AS GE//INCF

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0854

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ESTC MILI PFOR SY LE

SUBJ: LOCKHEED C-130 CONTRACT WITH SYRIAN AIR FORCE

1. SUMMARY: LOCKHEED REPS BRIEFED EMBASSY OFFICERS ON CURRENT STATUS OF LOCKHEED EFFORT TO SELL TWO C-130H'S TO SYRIAN AIR FORCE. THEY SAID MAJ GEN JAMIL HAD MENTIONED TO THEM SYRIAN CONCERN THAT COMMUNISTS AND LEFTISTS MAY TRY TO UNDERCUT CURRENT CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON.

2. THREE REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCKHEED-GEORGIA MET WITH DCM AND DATT ON 14 FEBRUARY TO REPORT STATUS OF LOCKHEED'S EFFORTS TO SELL TWO C-130H AIRCRAFT TO SYRIAN AIR FORCE (SAF). LOCKHEED TEAM CONSISTED OF REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL SALES DIRECTOR NED RIDINGS, MIDDLE EAST SALES REPRESENTATIVE G.B. METHVIN AND TRAINING SALES REP R.M PARKER. TEAM'S MAIN INTEREST WAS TO SOLICIT EMBASSY VIEWS ON MUNITIONS LICENSE APPLICATION.

3. GROUP EXPLAINED THAT LOCKHEED NOW HAD A SIGNED
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CONTRACT WITH SAF FOR THE TWO AIRCRAFT AND THAT M C LICENSE

REQUEST HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT IN DECEMBER 1975. SALE AND DOWNPAYMENT ARE CONTINGENT ON LOCKHEED RECEIVING MUNITIONS LICENSE APPROVAL BY APRIL 30 TO MEET PROJECTED DELIVERY DATES IN SPRING OF 77. THEY DID, HOWEVER, STATE THAT LOCKHEED HAD A LITTLE MORE FLEXIBILITY WITH SAF ORDER THAN WITH SOME OTHERS SINCE SYRIANS WANTED "PLAIN VANILLA C-130'S WITHOUT ANY UNUSUAL OR EXOTIC EQUIPMENT OR EXTRAS. SALE WILL BE A STRAIGHT COMMERCIAL CASH DEAL WHICH LOCKHEED IS GREATLY INTERESTED IN CONSUMMATING. THEY SAID THAT LOCKHEED HAD DISCUSSED MATTER WITH ASST SEC ATHERTON.

4. LOCKHEED TEAM SAID IT HAD MET WITH SAF COMMANDER MAJI JAMIL, SAF CHIEF ENGINEER ZUHAYR SHARABATI AND HEAD OF MIN DEF SUPPLY DEPARTMENT ASAD MUQAYYAD, ALL MAJ GENS, ON 14 FEB TO REVIEW STATUS OF CONTRACT. JAMIL TOLD GROUP THAT SYRIANS WANT C-130'S VERY MUCH AND HAVE DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING WHY USG SLOW TO ISSUE LICENSE. JAMIL SAID C-130'S WOULD BE SAF PROPERTY AND WOULD BEAR SAF NUMBERS BUT THEY WANTED THEM PAINTED IN SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES COLORS (BLUE AND WHITE) SINCE WHEN PLANES LANDED AT FOREIGN TERMINALS THEY DID NOT WANT TO GIVE IMPRESSION THAT SYRIA IS A MILITARISTIC NATION. (COMMENT: WE BELIEVE ALL RUSSIAN TRANSPORTS NOW IN SAF ARE ALSO PAINTED IN SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES COLORS.)

5. ACCORDING TO THE GROUP, LOCKHEED ALSO WAS NEGOTIATING A ONE YEAR TRAINING AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT CALLING FOR 13 LOCKHEED TECHNICIANS TO BE STATIONED IN SYRIA.

6. EMBOFFS POINTED OUT THAT LOCKHEED APPEARED TO HAVE TAKEN ALL NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE STEPS. THEY POINTED OUT HOWEVER THAT FIRM WAS IN EFFECT BREAKING NEW GROUND SINCE THIS WOULD BE, IF APPROVED, THE FIRST MAJOR SALE OF MUNITIONS LICENSE EQUIPMENT TO SYRIA IN A GENERATION. THEREFORE IT SEEMED CERTAIN THAT SALE WOULD NOT BE TREATED IN ROUTINE MANNER BY USG AND WOULD REQUIRE HIGH LEVEL DECISION. WE COULD NOT PREDICT OUTCOME.

7. GROUP SAID THAT DURING THE MEETING WITH JAMIL THE SUBJECT OF SYRIA'S ROLE IN LEBANON CAME UP BRIEFLY. JAMIL APPARENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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SAID THAT ONE OF HIS MAJOR CONCERNS AT THE MOMENT WAS TO INSURE THAT COMMUNISTS AND OTHER LEFTIST GROUPS DID NOT UNDERCUT SYRIAN EFFORTS TO STABILIZE SITUATION THERE. MURPHY

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